
Sunday Eucharist Evaluation Instrument

The Church throughout the centuries has cherished the Eucharist. “No Christian community can be built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist” (John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* #33).

This Sunday Eucharist Evaluation Instrument is not intended to be a comprehensive checklist or set of rules for all possible liturgical norms and/or abuses. Instead, it is a set of questions, addressing the most significant principles which the tradition and teaching of the Church give us to govern the faithful and authentic celebration of the Eucharist in our parish churches. These questions can be a valuable guide for pastors, priest celebrants, liturgy committees, and others in leadership positions for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. It is not the authoritative “last word,” but can serve as an important beginning.

The evaluation tool can be used in a variety of ways. It will be most effective when used over a period of time, one year or more, working on one section at a time.

Part of each liturgy committee meeting may be devoted to one section of the evaluation, or, if the liturgy committee meets weekly, you may wish to devote one meeting a month to working with the questionnaire.

Each question or set of questions is followed by several lines for individual notes and responses. Most of the questions may be answered with a simple yes or no, but they are designed to stimulate discussion as to what can be done to improve this aspect of the Eucharistic celebrations in the parish.

The first three sections of the evaluation form: Primacy of the Assembly, Silence, and Music, are general in nature and intended to be used first. The Additional Questions may be addressed in numerical order, or you may wish to begin with an area that is of particular concern, for example, the Liturgy of the Word or the Communion Rite.

Liturgy Documents and Resources

There are numerous Church documents which guide us in the celebration of the Eucharist. Primary among these is the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, promulgated on December 4, 1963 during the Second Vatican Council and papal documents such as *Mysterium Fidei*, *Dies Domini*, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* and *Mane Nobiscum Domini*. Other important sources are the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), *Lectionary for Mass: Introduction* (LMIn) and the recent instruction, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (RS). In addition, the 1967 Instruction of the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery (*Eucharisticum Mysterium*) enunciates many important principles for the interpretation of later documents. For us in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, *Gather Faithfully Together* (GFT), the pastoral letter written by Cardinal Roger Mahony in 1997, also serves as a primary resource for our celebrations of the Eucharist.

OM	<i>Ordo Missae</i> (Script of the Mass in the Roman Missal)
CSL	<i>Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy</i>
DD	<i>Dies Domini</i>
EE	<i>Ecclesia de Eucharistia</i>
EM	<i>Eucharisticum Mysterium</i> (Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, 1967)
MND	<i>Mane Nobiscum Domine</i>
GFT	<i>Gather Faithfully Together</i>
GIRM	<i>General Instruction of the Roman Missal</i>
LMIn	<i>Lectionary for Mass: Introduction</i>
RS	<i>Redemptionis Sacramentum</i>
BLS	<i>Built of Living Stones</i>
MICW	<i>Music in Catholic Worship</i>
FYH	<i>Fulfilled in Your Hearing</i>

Primacy, Rights and Duties of the Assembly

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (CSL) reiterated the traditional teaching of the Church that Christ is really present in the Eucharist in four ways, and this teaching was amplified by Pope Paul VI in his Encyclical, *Mysterium Fidei* (MF). Without denying or downplaying the real and substantial Presence of Christ under the consecrated elements of bread and wine, the Church recognizes that Christ is really present when his body, the Church, gathers to worship. All liturgical directives are primarily for the worshipping Church.

“The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people . . . is their right and duty by reason of their baptism” (CSL #14).

The celebration of the Eucharist is the worship of the whole Christ, head and members. The assembly, gathered for Eucharist, manifests the Church as the body of Christ, and the members individually are members of the one body of Christ (CSL #7).

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the life and mission of the Church (CSL #10).

The members of the Eucharistic assembly have both the right and the duty to participation that is full, conscious, and active. Note that the “right” of the assembly comes before their “duty.” The primary purpose of those responsible for liturgical leadership is to enable the members of the assembly to fulfill their rightful participation.

All liturgical ministers, including the priest celebrant, are first and foremost members of the assembly, not apart from it, and fulfill their various ministerial roles, including the unique power of the priest representing Christ as head, in relation to the whole assembly.

In matters of external participation, whether singing, responding aloud, or posture, it must always be remembered that external signs are meaningless without corresponding internal dispositions. External uniformity is a sign of unity, however, imposed external uniformity can, and often does, fracture the very unity it is meant to signify and support.

1. Is there a competent person responsible for liturgy preparation and coordination in the parish?

2. Does this person have the support of the pastor and of a liturgy committee to carry out his or her responsibilities?

3. Do liturgical ministers of the parish see themselves primarily as servants of the assembly's communal worship?

4. Are all liturgical ministers adequately trained for their particular roles of service in accordance with their age, condition, state of life and their particular ministry? Are they familiar with the Church's documents and norms, particularly those relating to their role?

5. Is it evident that celebrants, lectors and musicians (including cantors and choir) have spent adequate time during the week in preparation for their ministries?

6. Do the actions of the assembly and the ministers, the moments of silence and the music preserve and respect the nature and dignity of the Eucharist?

7. Do a number of persons carry out the various liturgical ministries with no one person ordinarily exercising more than one ministry (RS #43)?

8. Is there sufficient bread and wine consecrated at every Mass so that all may partake of elements consecrated at that Mass, as is their right, thereby reducing or eliminating the need to go to the tabernacle during the Communion Rite (RS #89)?

9. Do musicians and other ministers lead first by example, rather than merely directing and instructing?

10. How effectively are the members of the assembly encouraged to participate fully in the liturgy by responses, acclamations, actions and active listening in silence?

11. Are members of the assembly embarrassed or made to feel out of place if they do not show desired external conformity?

Those responsible for ordering the liturgical worship of the Church must always bear in mind that the assembly exists only in its members. It is not a faceless crowd, but individuals who are members of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is not served by failing to recognize the individuality of its members. Leaders and servants of worship would do well to speak and think of “members of the assembly” rather than “the assembly.”

12. Is there an ongoing catechesis on the liturgy that is mystagogical? (“Mystagogical” means “teaching by reflecting on the experience of the mysteries.” For example, experiencing the sign of peace as a challenge to seek reconciliation with someone, or finding deeper meaning in the words of a song that is sung at a Sunday Mass.)

13. How well do celebrants and other liturgical ministers lead by example to embody the connection between Eucharist and mission, between liturgy and life?

14. Do liturgical ministers help the members of the assembly to see and understand the Eucharist as an invitation and challenge to bring all aspects of their daily lives into conformity with Christ?

15. Does the parish provide opportunities for members of the assembly to engage in genuine Christian witness outside the liturgy, acting upon the commission at the end of the Mass?

16. How well does the parish recognize the Christian witness given by its members in all forms of service, whether or not sponsored by the Church?

Silence

Both the nature and the directives for celebration of the liturgy call for times of silence. But silence must be experienced as serving the goals of communal worship, not something imposed or done for its own sake. There are various kinds of silence.

The invitation to call to mind our sins and to pray should be followed by a brief pause to allow the members of the assembly to do what they are being asked to do, recollect their minds and heart. Such a pause should be clearly defined by the posture and attitude of the priest celebrant.

Attentive listeners need a moment following the proclamation of each reading to let it register. These moments should be brief, but clearly defined by the attitude and posture of ministers of the word.

The Eucharistic Prayer needs to be clearly defined by an intentional pause by the celebrant between the conclusion of the prayer over the gifts and the Preface dialogue, as well as after the Great Amen and the invitation to the Lord's Prayer.

A substantial silence after the homily and before the Prayer after Communion can assist the members of the assembly to reflect on the word of God.

On the subject of silence, it is important to note whether the celebrant observes the directions concerning the prayers at the Preparation of the Gifts and his preparation for and reception of Communion inaudibly. There is good reason for this – these are prayers meant for his private devotion rather than the assembly's participation.

Another important consideration under the heading of "silence" has to be the time before and after Mass – especially before. Many people legitimately want some quiet time to prepare for the celebration of the Mass. Greeting and fellowship time should properly take place in gathering areas outside the worship space. However, there is frequent carelessness about the preparation for Mass, especially if the music involves setup and rehearsal of the musicians. Consideration should be given to the effect that this sometimes noisy commotion has on the spirit of the members of the assembly who are gathering to worship,

17. Are the times of silence called for by the liturgy well ordered and meaningful (GIRM #45)? What can we do better to plan for and lead the times of silence so that they serve the worship of the members of the assembly?

For example:

- Is there a time for quiet prayer before the celebration begins? _____
- Is time allowed between the invitation to the opening prayer and the spoken prayer for members of the assembly to collect their thoughts and prayers and silently express them? _____
- Is enough silence provided during the Liturgy of the Word? _____
- Is there a brief pause after each of the petitions in the General Intercessions to enable assembly members to make the prayers their own before speaking the response? _____
- Does the presider pause for a moment after the Prayer over the Gifts and after the Great Amen to help convey the distinct importance and unity of the Eucharistic Prayer? _____

- Is there a period of profound silence after Communion? _____

Music

Music has an extremely important role in the liturgy, but it is always to serve what is going on in the liturgy, it is never an end in itself. It may serve the unity and spirit of the assembly, drawing its members together in mind and heart. It may serve to embody proclamation or prayer; it may enhance silence and reflection. According to the documents, certain elements of the liturgy call for music more than others, such as acclamations, litanies, processions, and the responsorial psalm. Presidential prayers can be enhanced if sung well, but only if the celebrant's singing ability actually does make them more expressive than speaking them.

18. Does the music at Mass genuinely serve the assembly's worship?

19. Are competence and spirit in liturgical music leadership valued and supported? How is this done?

20. Is there an ongoing study of the documents relating to music in our liturgy?

21. Does the choice of music give primacy to the acclamations (Gospel Acclamation, doxology to the Lord's Prayer and Eucharistic Acclamations) which should be sung "even at Masses in which little else is sung" (MICW #54)?

22. Do cantors, song leaders and other musicians project a welcoming and hospitable presence?

23. Is music chosen to fit the liturgical season, the part of the Mass and the diversity of the members of the assembly?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

The Worshipping Environment

“The church building houses the community of the baptized as it gathers to celebrate the sacred liturgy. By its practical design and beauty it fosters the full, dignified, and graceful celebration of these rites” (BLS #46).

1. Is the worship space free of clutter and crowding, allowing for beauty and simplicity?

2. Do added elements or decorations enhance the appearance of the space and not impede or distract from ritual actions? _____
3. Do worship aids facilitate the participation of the members of the assembly, including active listening when the Scriptures are proclaimed? _____
4. Is the sound system adequate, with consistent volume from microphone to microphone? Has consideration been give to the hearing impaired? _____
5. Is there adequate access and are places provided for persons in wheelchairs or with other physical disabilities? _____

Immediate Preparation

“Even before the celebration itself, it is commendable that silence be observed in the church, in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas, so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred action in a devout and fitting manner” (GIRM #45).

6. Have sacristans put everything in place well before the Mass is scheduled to begin?

7. Is the choir in place and musical instruments and other equipment set up well before the liturgy begins? _____
8. Do other ministers arrive sufficiently early to allow time for last-minute preparations or changes, as well as quiet prayer before the Mass begins? _____

Opening Rites

“We come on the Lord’s Day to the table of the Eucharist because we have been through the waters of Baptism... we gather on Sunday, not as isolated persons, but as the Church, with its diversity of cultures, languages and races” (GFT #94).

- 9. Are there ministers of hospitality in the gathering space or at entrances to the church, and do they extend a sincere and warm welcome to everyone who comes? _____
- 10. Is the gathering song chosen to reflect the character of the season, the occasion, and the assembly? Does it serve to unite the assembly in a spirit of common prayer? Is the text of the song respected? _____
- 11. Is the procession well ordered and dignified? _____
- 12. Are the sign of the cross and the liturgical greeting the first words spoken by the priest celebrant, without additional “secular” words of greeting? _____
- 13. Are the introductory words of the celebrant clear and concise? _____
- 14. Is the introduction to the Penitential Rite clear and concise? _____
- 15. If the option to use “other invocations” is used in Penitential Rite III, are the invocations “christocentric” and in praise of God’s saving action in Christ? Note that the words which conclude the penitential rite should be spoken without making the sign of the cross. _____
- 16. Is the Rite of Sprinkling used on occasions when it is especially significant, e.g., at Easter time. Is it done in a way that its meaning is evident to all? _____
- 17. If there is singing, the Gloria should always be sung. Is it sung in such a way that the assembly can express joy and praise? _____

Liturgy of the Word

“It should be borne in mind that *the liturgical proclamation of the word of God*, especially in the Eucharistic assembly, is not so much a time for meditation and catechesis as *a dialogue between God and his People*, a dialogue in which the wonders of salvation are proclaimed and the demands of the Covenant are continually restated” (DD #40).

18. Is the proclamation of the Word of God, and especially the homily, truly effective in opening up the Scriptures for the nourishment of the members of the Assembly?

19. How do the lectors prepare for their proclamation? Is their preparation adequate? Is there a consistent program for ongoing preparation, study, and practice? _____
20. Does the homilist involve other members of the community in the preparation of the homily, as recommended (FYH #106 & GFT #58)? _____
21. Can all who proclaim the Scripture readings and the homilist be clearly heard and seen by all in the assembly, including those who may be hearing impaired? _____
22. Are all of the Scriptures, including the Responsorial Psalm, proclaimed from the ambo (LMIn #22)? _____
23. Are the Scriptures always proclaimed from the appropriate books? (Missalettes or loose papers should never be used for proclamation.) _____
24. Are the Lectionary and Book of the Gospels “worthy books,” treated with reverence throughout the entire liturgical celebration? Have they been allowed to become tattered or soiled? (The same goes for the Sacramentary and other books used at Mass.) _____
25. Is the Responsorial Psalm sung? Is it the psalm of the day or one appropriate to the season? (Other songs should not be used in place of the Responsorial Psalm.)

26. Is the Alleluia (Verse before the Gospel) sung, and led in a lively and spirited way? If not sung, it should be omitted. _____
27. Is the assembly encouraged to listen actively to the Scripture readings rather than follow along in a missalette (GFT #52)? Do the presider and other liturgical ministers lead by giving an example of visibly paying attention to the lector?

28. What means are provided to encourage parishioners to reflect on the Scripture readings before coming to weekend liturgies (GFT #41)? _____
29. Is there a substantial pause after each reading and ample time of silence following the homily to allow reflection upon the Word that has just been proclaimed and preached? (All impressions of haste or “busy-ness” should be avoided.) _____
30. Are catechumens dismissed appropriately, emphasizing their growing unity with the Christian community, and the importance of their continued reflection on the Scripture readings? Is it done in a way that speaks to the whole assembly of the value of the gift of faith? _____
31. How is the Creed recited: slowly and deliberately, or rushed and perfunctory? During the Creed, are all led to bow at the appropriate words by the example of the presider and

other ministers? Are the Apostles' Creed and the Renewal of Baptismal Promises used on appropriate occasions? _____

32. Is the Prayer of the Faithful prepared and led in a way that it is evidently the prayer of all in the assembly? Are the intercessions timely and do they reflect the important needs of church, nation, world, the suffering, and the local community? Are they proclaimed from the Ambo (GIRM #71)? _____

Liturgy of the Eucharist

“Nothing more clearly and wonderfully defines who we are as Catholics as does the celebration of the Eucharist, the Sacrifice of the Mass. We are the Eucharistic Church historically, and the Eucharist has been at the very heart and center of our beliefs and practices” (GFT #187).

33. Are all the offerings brought forth in the Presentation of the Gifts representative of the true gift that God expects from us (RS #70)? Are only bread and wine (and the monetary gifts of the faithful as appropriate) brought up, with no other “symbolic” gifts? Is the procession done in a way that emphasizes that these are truly the gifts of the faithful? _____
34. Have the vessels been artistically designed for the specific purpose of holding the Precious Blood and the Body of Christ? _____
35. When several chalices are required for distribution of the Precious Blood, is the wine poured into the chalices at the Preparation of the Gifts (RS #106) or during the fraction rite? ***Note: Cardinal Mahony has granted exceptions to RS #106 (which requires that the wine be poured into chalices before the consecration to prevent spillage of the Precious Blood) for the following legitimate reasons: where the altar is too small to accommodate many chalices; where the number of chalices is so large that they visibly detract from the important sign of One Bread and One Cup. In all cases, the vessels must be dignified and appropriate, and the ministers must be fully trained and have demonstrated the ability to pour the Precious Blood without danger of spillage.*** _____
36. Is the Eucharistic Bread used by the celebrant large enough that at least some parts coming from the fraction may be distributed to some of the faithful during Communion (RS #49)? _____

37. Are the gestures of placing the bread and wine on the altar (and pouring the unconsecrated wine into chalices) done simply? In order to avoid verbal clutter and to emphasize the actions, is the celebrant careful to say the prescribed prayers inaudibly?

38. Is incense appropriately used on some occasions? _____

39. Is the assembly invited to stand at the beginning of the invitation to the Prayer over the Gifts? _____

The Eucharistic Prayer

40. In preparing for the Mass, is sufficient attention given to the vast selection of prefaces and Eucharistic Prayers, emphasizing various themes, which is offered in the Roman Missal? _____

41. Is congregational singing normative, especially for the Eucharistic Acclamations: the Sanctus, the Memorial Acclamation, and the Great Amen? _____

42. Does the celebrant proclaim the Eucharistic Prayer in such a way that the assembly perceives him praying in the name of all? Does he proclaim it in a way that emphasizes the unity of the prayer, by pausing before the Introductory Dialogue and after the Great Amen, and by refraining from any commentary at any point during the prayer itself?

43. Are the celebrant's posture and gestures simple and dignified as called for in the rubrics? In particular, does he refrain from breaking the host (RS #55) or an exaggerated gesture of "giving" the host and the chalice at the institution narrative?

44. During the Eucharistic Prayer, is the assembly's attitude one of active and prayerful participation? Are the norms of the U.S. Church regarding the posture of the assembly followed (kneeling until the conclusion of the doxology)? _____

45. Is the Eucharistic Prayer prayed without the distraction of musical accompaniment, except for the acclamations, which are integral to the prayer (RS #53)? _____

Communion Rite

“For what is the bread? It is the body of Christ. And what do those who receive it become? The Body of Christ – not many bodies but one body. For as the bread is completely one, though made up of many grains of wheat.... so too are we mutually joined to one another and together united with Christ” (St. John Chrysostom, quoted in EE #23).

- 46. Is the Lord’s Prayer recited or sung, and what criteria are used to make this decision? If the Lord’s Prayer is sung, does the priest sing the embolism and the assembly sing the concluding doxology in order to show that they are three parts of one extended prayer?

- 47. What is the posture of the assembly during the Lord’s Prayer? Have those responsible for the liturgy discussed the options – “orans” or joining hands – as well as the freedom of the members of the assembly to choose? _____
- 48. Does the practice of the sign of peace embody its meaning as an expression of peace and reconciliation, signifying our unity as members of the Body of Christ, as we move towards Communion? _____
- 49. The Lamb of God accompanies the breaking of the bread (and the filling of the cups, if necessary), not the other way around. Therefore, does the singing continue until the actions are completed? _____
- 50. In order not to multiply the wordiness of the liturgy, is the celebrant careful to say the private prayers of the priest inaudibly, as called for in the General Instruction (GIRM #84, 156)? _____
- 51. Is the invitation to Communion made in a simple and dignified way according to the rite, without excessive additions or commentary? _____
- 52. Do the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion receive first in order to show that ministry is most appropriately giving what one has received? Do all ministers of Holy Communion, including the celebrant, demonstrate attentive reverence for the real presence of Christ in both the Eucharistic elements and in the members of the Body of Christ who are receiving Communion? _____
- 53. Are the Communion Stations and ministers arranged in a way that facilitates a unified and dignified Communion procession? Is the procession facilitated reverently and attentively? Does the music properly accompany the procession? _____
- 54. Do members of the assembly understand the reasons why it is appropriate for all to remain standing during the entire Communion procession? Can this be better communicated to them? _____

deepened in the Eucharist, issues in the Church and in every Christian *an urgent summons to testimony and evangelization....*The dismissal at the end of each Mass is *a charge* given to Christians, inviting them to work for the spread of the Gospel and the imbuing of society with Christian values” (MND #24).

- 61. Is an effort made to keep any announcements brief, clear, and pertinent? _____
- 62. The involvement of qualified lay persons preaching brief reflections or instructions at this time of the Mass is permitted. Is any effort being made to implement this? _____
- 63. Are solemn blessings employed on occasions when they are appropriate and meaningful? _____
- 64. What kind of music accompanies the recessional? Is it appropriate for sending forth?
Is the option to use instrumental music as a recessional occasionally employed?

- 65. Is there a place and a period of time following the liturgy for people to “meet and greet”? _____
- 66. Who attends to putting the church environment in order for the next Mass?

